

Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Submission No: 504
Submitted by: Urban Utilities
Publication:
Attachments:
Submitter Comments:



The Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation and Amendment Bill 2025

Submission from  UrbanUtilities

To: Committee Secretary

State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

Sent: SDIWC@parliament.qld.gov.au (via online submission)

Date: 20 May 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Urban Utilities welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the new provisions and amendments to the *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025* (the **Bill**) and supports the intention of the Bill.

Urban Utilities appreciates the challenges facing South-East Queensland to achieve the timely delivery of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games (the **Games**) in a way that maximises the legacy benefits of the Games, particularly in relation to infrastructure, housing and jobs. Urban Utilities recognises the need to address community concern regarding the potential unintended cost-of-living pressures created by this Bill.

- 1.2 Urban Utilities is a statutory authority established under the *South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009* (the **SEQ Water Act**) and, as Central South-East Queensland's Distributor-Retailer Authority, is responsible for drinking water distribution and wastewater services to more than 1.6 million customers across the Brisbane, Ipswich, Scenic Rim, Somerset, and Lockyer Valley local government areas in South-East Queensland. These services are critical and underpin our growing population and economic growth for the region. Urban Utilities is committed to:

- enabling sustainable growth through the investment in, and operation of reliable infrastructure (not just for the Games, but for the future of South-East Queensland); and
- providing a safe and secure supply of drinking water and wastewater services in a manner that is affordable for our customers.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this submission is to highlight areas where additional clarity and communication are required to ensure safe and sustainable planning and delivery of water and wastewater networks to service and support Authority Venues, Other Venues

(collectively **Games Venues**), Villages and a growing population, for the Games and beyond.

2.2 Urban Utilities' concerns focus on the following areas:

- Safety and security of the water and wastewater infrastructure network;
- Appropriate allocation of risks and liabilities for water and wastewater infrastructure assets; and
- Limiting the impact of increased costs to households and other customers.

3 Safety and security of the water and wastewater infrastructure network

3.1 Concern: (Removal of water approval processes for connections)

3.1.1 While Urban Utilities supports expeditious planning and approval processes, the removal of critical water approval requirements raises several concerns regarding the management, sustainability, and the safe provision of water and wastewater services for the people of South-East Queensland.

3.1.2 Urban Utilities manages all network connections via a water approval process under the provisions of the SEQ Water Act. The Bill proposes that where a relevant entity is entitled to access or connect to, or otherwise use necessary Games infrastructure for the purpose of development or use, it can do so without Urban Utilities authorisation. Water approval requirements prescribed under the SEQ Water Act will be over-ridden impacting the security and reliability of the water and wastewater infrastructure network that services the community.

3.1.3 Similarly, it remains unclear how compliance with the SEQ Water Supply and Sewerage Design and Construction Code (the **Code**) will be ensured for Games Venues and Villages impacting water networks. Uncertainty surrounds the process of final inspections and certifications to guarantee compliance with the Code and relevant safety requirements. Safety assurances are absent, posing a risk to the security and reliability of water and wastewater services for the greater community and for Water Service Providers.

3.1.4 In absence of these existing vital controls, safety and security of connections to the water and wastewater network may be compromised impacting the delivery of safe and reliable water services during the Games and into the future.

3.2 Request

3.2.1 Amend the Bill to clarify

- (i) that a Distributor-Retailer must:

- be provided the same level of information as prescribed by the water approval process; and
 - be given the opportunity to raise concerns where:
 - connections do not comply with connection criteria, the SEQ Design and Construction Code; or
 - because the connection is not technically feasible or would unreasonably interfere with the connection or supply of services to other customers.
- (ii) the statutory process for updating information within connection areas where a connection is enabled without a water approval, and transfer of ‘as constructed’ documentation to network owners, and
- (iii) that the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (**GIICA**) check the capacity and capability of the proposed connection with the network owner for operability and safety before, during and following the Games.

4 Appropriate Allocation of risks and liabilities for assets

4.1 Concern: (Risks attached to assets delivered outside of standards)

- 4.1.1 It is unclear how risks attached to assets delivered by GIICA will be managed in the short and long term, including impacts on network operations, design, costs, and safety and provision of information for services that can affect network function and other customers, particularly if they conflict with a Distributor-Retailer’s standards.
- 4.1.2 The Bill places restrictions on starting civil proceedings if there is a reasonable prospect the proceeding will prevent timely delivery of an Authority Venue, Other Venue or Village. There are restrictions on the ability to recover costs for damage to or interference with assets, seek recourse for building over assets without consent, seek remediation or disconnection, and seek damages at law otherwise.
- 4.1.3 Restricting Urban Utilities’ ability to seek recourse and remediation (or enforce breaches of its authorising or associated Acts) raises serious concerns for the delivery of safe and efficient water and wastewater services that will be a legacy for the region for many decades and adversely impact on the future growth of South-East Queensland.

4.2 Request:

- 4.2.1 Clarify in the Bill the process and financial responsibility for risk-ownership and rectification of defects and other issues for assets delivered outside of current

standards and processes or otherwise where the provision of a relevant Act cannot be enforced, and

4.2.2 Specify that GIIICA / the Queensland Government assumes liability:

- for network connection issues where connection is not by a water approval for a defined period (e.g. 10 years) or enter a security bond arrangement;
- where an action taken (as authorised by the proposed Bill) is not otherwise in conformity with a relevant Act.

5 Financial sustainability and cost impacts on households and other customers

5.1 Concern: (Cost recovery for growth infrastructure)

5.1.1 The Bill exempts the levying of infrastructure charges (and the imposition of ‘charges’ generally) for Games Venues. For Villages, infrastructure charges may be payable at the discretion of the Minister and the Bill does not specify how charges will be used to recover network costs. Following a direction from the Minister, Urban Utilities can be required to provide and or maintain necessary games infrastructure at its own cost.

5.1.2 Restricting the levying of infrastructure charges by Urban Utilities for Authority Venues, Other Venues and Villages, and mandating the construction and maintenance of other infrastructure by Urban Utilities creates an inequity to the people of South-East Queensland through increased water bills for households and other customers. It overlooks the significant cost in the detailed design and delivery of augmented infrastructure upstream and downstream of new sites that is critical to maintaining services during the games and into the future.

5.1.3 Current infrastructure charging mechanisms for Priority Development Areas (PDA) substantially limit cost recovery for Distributor Retailers and the large magnitude Olympics infrastructure, Authority Venues, Other Venues and Villages will exacerbate this issue. This again creates an inequity to the people of South-East Queensland through increased water bills for households and other customers to subsidise corporate developers for further growth.

5.2 Request:

5.2.1 Clarify in the Bill the mechanisms through which Distributor Retailers can recover costs for design and delivery of infrastructure required to service Authority Venues, Other Venues and Villages including upstream and downstream augmentation to allow for additional capacity.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 Urban Utilities recognises the opportunities that the Games offers to the people of Queensland, including community amenity, growth and development, and a lasting legacy.
- 6.2 Urban Utilities would value opportunities to work with the Queensland Government and GLICA to ensure that water and wastewater services for the Games Venues and Villages are provided in a timely manner whilst minimising additional costs on the people of South-East Queensland and ensuring infrastructure is designed and delivered to a safe standard and integrates with existing and planned networks.
- 6.2 Urban Utilities would also welcome opportunities to contribute to streamlining design solutions that have the greatest potential to meet new demands, affordably and provide a lasting legacy.
- 6.3 Urban Utilities welcomes opportunities to continue to engage in planning and delivery for the Games and beyond.

Sincerely

Urban Utilities

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